

Tuesday, September 09, 2008

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FROM THE COEUR D'ALENE PRESS

Governor's Cup runneth over

Posted: Monday, Sep 08, 2008 - 11:20:54 pm PDT

Gov. Butch Otter speaks to participants and guides for the fishing portion of the Governor's Cup Friday. The event raised a record amount of money in its first year in Coeur d'Alene.

Event raises about \$775K for high school students during its first time in Cd'A

COEUR d'ALENE -- The Governor's Cup last weekend shattered previous fundraising records while debuting in North Idaho for the first time in its 37-year history.

"I couldn't have been more pleased or impressed by the hospitality of folks in Coeur d'Alene and throughout northern Idaho for hosting this great event. It more than justified our decision to take the Governor's Cup on the road for the first time," said Gov. Butch Otter.

Katie Hammon, executive director of the Idaho Governor's Cup Scholarship Fund, said the three-day event raised about \$775,000 for high school students across the state.

"It turned out perfect," she said. "It's about \$175,000 more than last year."

Co-hosted by The Coeur d'Alene Golf & Spa Resort and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, the Governor's Cup consists of golf, fly-fishing and shotgun sports designed to raise money for students who might not otherwise be able to attend college. The event has been held in Sun Valley for the 37 years it's been in existence.

Bill Reagan, general manager of The Resort, said plans are already being made to hold the event in Coeur d'Alene in 2010 after what a hit it was this year.

"It was a huge success," Reagan said. "In today's economy, that's a great thing."

Marc Stewart, spokesman for the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, said the tribe was "extremely honored" to be chosen as a co-host of the event that "raised a record amount of money while people had a really good time."

Hammon said the event picked up three new major North Idaho sponsors for the Governor's Cup which all donated \$25,000 or more: Potlatch, Coldwater Creek and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe.

"There were 75 to 100 more people than last year," Hammon said. "It's getting so big that Sun Valley and Coeur d'Alene are really the only two places left that can accommodate our group."

FROM THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

No education news stories posted online today.

FROM THE MOSCOW PULLMAN DAILY NEWS (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

UI plans to yank its airport funding

University will withdraw representative from board of directors, won't commit to long-term financial arrangement

By Hillary Hamm, Daily News staff writer

Posted on: Monday, September 08, 2008

Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport officials were put on alert last week that the University of Idaho plans to discontinue its financial contributions to the facility.

Airport Manager Robb Parish received a letter from UI Vice President of Finance Lloyd Mues that indicated the UI will bow out of its participatory role on the airport's board of directors. That also means the UI is pulling its \$12,500 annual contribution as part of an interlocal agreement and an additional \$7,500 annual commitment to help pay off a bond for terminal improvements.

Mues said with the bond expiring later this year - which is expected to roll over to finance a multimillion-dollar airport fire flow project - there's no better time for the UI to back out of the arrangement.

"The bottom line is that there's no antagonism, nothing, just that the UI should not be on the governing board of an airport," he said, adding that the decision comes after lengthy discussions with the university's legal team.

"Governing boards are the people that are typically responsible if there's an accident," Mues added. "The airport is an interesting, viable part of our community, and we will remain in support. But we're in the business of higher education. That's what we do to take our risks."

Mues said the airport can continue to ask the university for funding but whether it will be granted will be based on the UI budget.

"We will not commit to a long-term financial arrangement," he said. "We live in a time of tight resources and we have to do it this way."

For years the UI and WSU have had representatives sit on the airport's board of directors. WSU makes an annual contribution of \$18,935. Moscow and Pullman chip in \$32,013 apiece, and the Port of Whitman County and Latah County contribute \$20,750 and \$17,000, respectively.

Parish said the news is disappointing.

"I certainly hope the University of Idaho will reconsider its position, given how important the airport is to the university," he said, adding that members of the board will meet Tuesday morning to discuss the issue.

Collectively, the airport's sponsors contribute \$130,000, which amounts to 28 percent of the \$468,000 operating budget for 2008. Parish said the UI's decision won't affect the facility's capital improvement programs but it "certainly impacts our ability to establish maintenance reserves."

"It could create a situation where we would have to defer maintenance," he added. "It just depends on what comes at us."

Parish said there "is a concern" about other sponsors following the UI's lead and pulling funding.

"From my perspective I certainly hope the group will hold together," he said. "I think they will, because collectively they understand how important the airport is to the community."

The airport has seen financial success this year. Horizon's reintroduction of the 76-seat Q-400 has increased the number of passengers by 30 percent compared to the same time last year, and Parish estimates a total of 32,000 boardings by the end of 2008.

More boardings means more fees, as passengers are charged \$4.50 per flight. That money is used for the local share of federal grants and big capital projects.

Landing fees also are up because of the larger planes. The fees are charged to airlines based on the weight of the planes that are landing. The Q-400s bring in 95 cents per 1,000 pounds compared to the 90 cents per 1,000 pounds that was charged for the 37-seat Dash-8s that previously served the airport. The Q-400s weigh about 64,000 pounds and are charged a little more than \$60 to land at the airport, which is a substantial increase over the \$35 generated by the 34,500-pound Dash-8s.

Parish said landing fees have generated about \$55,000 thus far in 2008 compared to \$51,000 in all of 2007. He estimates that the fees will bring in more than \$84,000 by the end of the year.

"It's actually a little higher than we budgeted. And that's just the landing fees," he said, noting that the money will go into the operations budget, pays for emergency fire services, snow removal and runway maintenance. The airport had hoped to use increased revenue from boarding and landing fees to become sustainable, which would have allowed it to eventually phase out the necessary funding contributions from sponsors.

However, the UI's decision may alter any hopes of financial stability.

"It would really slow us up," said Pullman Mayor Glenn Johnson, who also is an airport board member. "It means a drop in funding levels. It also means a drop in participation."

"We're not at the point to be self-sustaining right now. It's a struggle."

Johnson said the UI's letter "doesn't come as a surprise" given its budgetary problems over the last several years.

"I think they're still trying to get through their budget right now. I think they saw this as something that was not that important," he said. "We want to remind them, too, that the University of Idaho football team flies out of the airport."

OUR VIEW: Luna's budget plan lacks fiscal responsibility (editorial)

Posted on: Monday, September 08, 2008

Tom Luna apparently hasn't been reading the newspaper.

If he had, the Idaho public schools chief might think twice about the amount of money he plans to request from the Legislature in January.

Luna recently unveiled a 2009 fiscal year budget proposal that would cause sticker shock for Idaho legislators even in the best of economic times.

Luna plans to ask for \$1.495 billion. That's a \$77 million increase over last year's appropriation and a whopping \$405 million increase over the 2006 fiscal year budget proposed by his predecessor, Marilyn Howard.

Idaho's financial outlook for the coming year is sketchy at best as the country teeters on the brink of a recession. That is particularly disconcerting considering the state's education dollars largely depend on its economic stability.

It's highly unlikely that legislators would boost education funding under the circumstances.

A more prudent option for Luna is to fall back on his experiences in the private sector.

His 2006 campaign highlighted the fact that he took over a small company and turned it into a multimillion-dollar operation, and he said his business background provided what it takes "to be a successful superintendent in the 21st century."

Luna's business might not have gotten off the ground had he followed the spendthrift plan he's suggesting for the state, which includes a revamped version of his failed pay-for-performance package for teachers.

Luna was put in office to make the most of every dollar spent on education, not deplete the state's education coffers when future funding is uncertain.

Lawmakers would be more apt to consider his budget request if the price tag reflected what the state realistically can afford.

- Doug Bauer, for the editorial board

FROM THE LEWISTON TRIBUNE (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Arndt named to Lewiston School Board

Potlatch employee fills vacant slot

By Kerri Sandaine

Tuesday, September 9, 2008

Gary Arndt

Gary Arndt, a director of customer services and relations at Potlatch Corp., was appointed to fill a vacant spot on the Lewiston School Board Monday and will be seated at a Sept. 22 work session.

"I'm excited," Arndt said after the meeting. "I've got some big shoes to fill. I'm looking forward to serving."

School directors also interviewed Andrew Dahlquist, an associate professor of math and physics at Lewis-Clark State College and Mark Havens, executive director of Gritman Medical Center Foundation, for the slot vacated by Neal Clinger. Bill Perez, a Lewiston dentist, withdrew his name Monday afternoon because of time constraints.

Board members said they were impressed with all of the candidates before voting 4-0 in favor of Arndt's appointment.

"He lives here. He works here. He's really invested in our community, and I really liked that a lot," said Dan Rudolph, school board president.

Arndt is a member of the Lewis-Clark State College Foundation board who has lived in Lewiston 16 years. He is a native of Salt Lake City with a master's degree in public administration from the University of Utah, and he's worked at Potlatch for 21 years. Three of his four children graduated from Lewiston High School and the youngest is a junior at the school.

When asked to list the greatest needs of the school district, he said preparing children for the future and balancing student, infrastructure and community needs. He told the board he's a strong supporter of the new block system at place in the high school and has a soft spot for liberal arts education.

In other business, JoAnne Greear, principal of Jenifer Junior High, said the school met all 41 targets for adequate yearly progress and test scores went up significantly in several areas. Teachers have been working together, holding kids accountable and looking at what's going right, she told the board.

FROM THE IDAHO-PRESS TRIBUNE, NAMPA

School board

meetings

Nampa School board

Will meet at 7:30 p.m. today at the Ted J. Comstock Administration Building, 619 S. Canyon St., Nampa. Work session at 6:30 p.m.

Agenda includes consent agenda, field trip requests, discussion/action items, maintenance project report, NHS artificial turf on football field, certification of tax levies, certification of emergency levy, pre-employment and employee drug screening, approval of purchase of management services software, rental agreement process.

Vision charter School board

Will meet at 6 p.m. Wednesday at Vision Charter School, 20185 Lolo Ave., Caldwell.

Agenda includes power point presentation, discussion of history and mission of school.

Vallivue School board

Will meet at 6 p.m. today at the district office, 5207 S. Montana Ave., Caldwell. Executive session at 5:30 p.m.

Agenda includes consent agenda, resignations/retirements, new hires, change of job status, reading and approval of policies, accept resignation from Steve Lynn, trustee for Zone 4, building projects update, facilities update, technology report, out-of-state band trip request, business reports, 2008-09 classified salary schedule, 2008-09 staff technology purchase program, transportation agreement from Marsing School District, policy review.

liberty charter board

Will meet at 6 p.m. today at Liberty Charter School, McKnight Bryant Center, 1063 E. Lewis Lane, Nampa. Executive session at 5:30 p.m.

Agenda includes new business; approval of bus rate increase; citizen of the week policy; principal's report; consent agenda.

Middleton School board

Will meet at 6:30 p.m. today at the district office, 5 S. Third Ave. W., Middleton.

Agenda includes consent agenda, old business: final update from architect on rebuilt MHS/MS building; new business: consider approval of final cost changes for rebuilt MHS/MS, the Idaho Center for MHS graduation, 2008-09 Food Service Department's co-op bids, appointment of the zone 3 board member, parent request for kindergarten bus route change, request from a MHS science teacher for a two-day trip to Craters of the Moon, adding a special board meeting on Sept. 30, changing the regular October board meeting date to Oct. 7, a new policy, a revised policy; personnel: approval of the certified and classified employees; reports.

Kuna School board

Will meet at 7 p.m. today at the Kuna High School Library, 637 E. Deer Flat Road, Kuna. Work session at 5:30 p.m. Executive session may follow.

Agenda includes superintendent's report: 2007 bond update, Indian Creek Greenbelt partnership, Adequate Yearly Progress compliance update; consent agenda, delegations, unfinished business: bond projects review/approval, recommendation to approve alternative school bid, permission to re-bid for fuel; new business: Kuna FFA national competition presentation/request, 2007-08 school district audit report, school resource officer agreement, first reading of revised board policy #565, immunization requirements; update on activities budget, piano fundraising update.

Marsing School board

Will meet at 8 p.m. today at the district office, 209 8th Ave. W.

Agenda includes consent agenda, discussion/reports: consideration of an update status report on the Canyon-Owyhee School Service Agency Board Meetings and other activities, transportation and maintenance, the federal programs and food service programs, principals' reports for the month of September; new business includes: introduction of new teachers to the Marsing School District, resignations, employment.

Meridian School board

Will meet at 7 p.m. today at Mountain View High School, 2000 S. Millennium Way, Meridian.

Agenda includes consent agenda: district financial summary, employment recommendations, summary of leave requests, nonresident student enrollment requests for the 2008-09 school year, agreements for contracted drug education and intervention services, award bid for transportation parking lot infill to C&A Paving in the amount of \$87,554, and to Benchmark Electric in the amount of \$54,625, requests to alter/ improve school properties at Crossroads Middle School, Mountain View High School and Rocky Mountain High School; discussion/action items: Global Outreach Charter Academy, Student Athlete Academy Charter, proposed policies, personnel.

The College of Idaho dorms get remodel

EDUCATION: School officials say it's an exciting time of growth

By Alisa Angelakis

aangelakis@idahopress.com

CALDWELL — Students at The College of Idaho are settling in to life on campus, which for some includes living in recently remodeled

Said junior Amber Steele: "It's really nice and more inviting than the other dorms."

S i m p l o t R e s i d e n c e Hall, after being mothballed for more than four years, came back into service this fall and provides 30 rooms for 47 students in its north wing, College officials said.

The south wing of the building, originally built in 1948, is now being remodeled; it will open for students after winter break in December.

Improvements include asbestos abatement, air-conditioning, new floors and windows, disabled accessibility, new plumbing and furniture.

"We took this building down to the studs," Communications Director Jennifer Oxley said. "It's basically a whole new building."

John Beck, project superintendent with Hoffman Construction, said all of the new mechanical units, such as heaters and air conditioners, create a "huge potential for energy savings."

Another addition is a new fire detection and alarm system.

“Not only is it fully operational in the north wing, but we also have an operational system in the south wing that will alert students in the occupied wing if we had a fire in the construction area,” Beck said.

The remodeling projects are being done in phases so that students can stay on campus during construction.

C of I sees growth
on campus

Oxley said the hall had been closed because the building was out of date and the college didn’t have enough students to fill it.

But last year dorm rooms were filled to capacity, and college officials expected an even higher number of students this fall, Oxley said.

College President Hoover said this year’s freshman class is probably one of the largest the school has ever seen — Oxley gave an estimated enrollment of 850 students at C of I for this fall.

“The College of Idaho is attracting larger numbers of the best and brightest students every year, and we need to improve our residence halls to accommodate them,” Hoover said.

“It’s very exciting to be on a growing campus,” Oxley said. “We were double checking and triple checking numbers to make sure we had beds for everyone. Frankly, it’s a wonderful problem to have.”

Other improvements:

The College of Idaho has made several additions and improvements to the campus aside from the recent renovation of Simplot Residence Hall:

n The campus now has two new tennis courts and resurfaced the existing three. The courts now have a distinctive purple playing surface. Landscaping was added in the area as well.

“The old courts were built in 1948 and had become an eyesore,” C of I President Bob Hoover said. “We’re in the process of making it a really nice part of the campus.”

n The college also got a \$287,000 remodel of the college’s library, which includes new computers, new furniture, connectivity improvements and new carpet.

“It makes it much more appropriate for this generation,” Hoover said. “This was an old library and it’s changed tremendously, given the quality of the network and the capability in there now. It upgrades the library to be part of the information age.”

Hoover said a gift from the Albertson’s Foundation and many others provided the money for the upgrades.
dorms.

“It’s a little bit smaller but a lot cleaner,” sophomore E l i z a b e t h Sonnichsen said of her new dorm room in Simplot Residence Hall.

Other newspapers’ views Luna’s ed budget isn’t realistic (Editorial)

Tom Luna apparently hasn’t been reading the newspaper. If he had, the Idaho public schools chief might think twice about the amount of money he plans to request from the Legislature in January. Luna recently unveiled a 2009 fiscal year budget proposal that would cause sticker shock for Idaho legislators in the best of economic times. Luna plans to ask for \$1.495 billion. That’s a \$77 million increase over last year’s appropriation and a whopping \$405 million increase over the 2006 fiscal year budget proposed by his predecessor, Marilyn Howard. Idaho’s

financial outlook for the coming year is sketchy at best as the country teeters on the brink of a recession. That is particularly disconcerting considering the state's education dollars largely depend on its economic stability. It's highly unlikely that legislators would boost education funding under the circumstances. A more prudent option for Luna is to fall back on his experiences in the private sector.

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Luna was put in office to make the most of every dollar spent on education, not deplete the state's education coffers when future funding is uncertain. Lawmakers would be more apt to consider his budget request if the price tag reflected what the state realistically can afford.

n This view is from the Moscow-Pullman Daily News editorial board in Moscow.

School funding comes up short

The head of the Idaho teachers' union says her group has not been consulted on details of State School Superintendent Tom Luna's latest proposed budget that includes money for a pay-for-performance plan. That is not a hopeful sign.

The Legislature voted last spring to dump a \$21 million version of Luna's pay-for-performance, in part because bonuses would have been based largely on how students perform on statewide tests. But the Idaho Education Association opposed the plan as well, and President Sherri Wood said the union had to be at the table when Luna and other education stakeholders hashed out details of a new bill this year.

One hang-up has been the lack of a uniform statewide teacher evaluation plan. A task force is scheduled to make a report on that in December. Luna's new budget covers everything from teacher salaries and efforts to boost student test scores in reading, to classroom supplies and a program to let high school students earn college credits.

Growing enrollment is evidence that lawmakers in Boise need to loosen the purse strings a bit, apart from pay-for-performance and other experiments.

Wood is already stating that the forthcoming teacher evaluation plan should stay separate from any pay-for-performance plan when the Legislature considers both proposals next year. Teacher evaluations, which now vary across the state, should be used to help teachers grow professionally, pinpointing their weaknesses and areas where they can improve, Wood says. She says the grading system should not be used to determine whether teachers are "good" or "bad" and whether they should be paid accordingly.

Pardon me? Doesn't that come under the category of performance? n From the Idaho State Journal editorial board in Pocatello.

FROM THE IDAHO STATESMAN

Private arts school in Eagle welcomes students back to new facility

Available courses for grades 6-12 range from acting to jazz combo to graphic design.

Chris Butler/Idaho Statesman

Linzy Bonner, 12, left, reacts to Camille Avery, 16, as teacher Jeff Gunstream looks on Monday morning in Action 303 class at ArtsWest School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Eagle. Monday was the first day of classes for the new school.

ELSEWHERE

Arts West School's Web site

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

More about the grand opening

What: Grand opening for ArtsWest School for the Performing and Visual Arts

Where: 3300 W. State St. (Idaho 44)

When: Noon to 8 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 27

Highlights: Tours of the campus, performances by student groups

More info: 938-5410; info@artswestschool.org

BY KATY MOELLER - kmoeller@idahostatesman.com

Edition Date: 09/09/08

Chas Baines couldn't sleep Sunday night. He was too keyed up about going to school on Monday.

"I love school," said the ninth-grader, whose class schedule this year includes advanced acting, individual vocal performance and jazz combo (he plays saxophone).

The 14-year-old aspiring actor is a student at Eagle's ArtsWest School for the Performing and Visual Arts, which welcomed students Monday to a new school building on Idaho 44 in west Eagle.

"It's really exciting," said ArtsWest Principal Elaine Klein, an energetic 69-year-old educator who came out of retirement to help get the school off the ground.

"I had all this knowledge of education," said Klein, a longtime believer in incorporating the arts across the curriculum. "I'd learned so much about what works and what doesn't."

ArtsWest's new two-story, 16,000-square-foot, Old World-style main building features large windows, high ceilings, gold walls and large granite classroom tables.

Behind the main building, an 11,000-square-foot building is under construction. The smaller building, which will be finished in a couple of weeks, will house more than a dozen thick-walled practice rooms, the cafeteria and a dance studio.

Students who attend ArtsWest pay \$9,800 in tuition annually, though some receive partial or full scholarships. This fall, 92 students from all over the Valley are enrolled in grades six to 12.

The school opened in trailers last fall. Construction on the campus was fast and furious over the summer.

ArtsWest co-founder Ken Cenell worked with a trio of carpenters to finish the interior, logging 16-hour days for much of the summer.

"It didn't matter what time of the day or night, you'd find Ken here," said Dr. Tom Ahlquist, an ER physician and partner in the Gardner Ahlquist Development company. "I've never seen a guy work that hard."

Gardner Ahlquist Development bankrolled the \$3.2 million construction project.

The school campus is the anchor of Gardner Ahlquist's 22-acre, \$22 million Eagle Island Crossing development, which will add 16 new business and office buildings along Idaho 44 at completion.

Ahlquist got involved in the school project after getting to know Ken and Mary Cenell, who created the popular Rivendell Music Academy, now ArtsWest Youth Conservatory. The after-school academy offers private lessons to hundreds of students.

Ahlquist's son, Thomas, took piano lessons at Rivendell, then found his true passion in jazz guitar. He's been attending ArtsWest since it opened last fall.

"It's been strange to see him like school so much - everything about it," Ahlquist said. "There's a level of kindness here that's not common."

Baines, the ninth-grade thespian, said ArtsWest is a warm place where students aren't in cliques.

"We're one big family," Baines said.

Darian Gonzales, an ArtsWest junior who enjoys drawing and studying graphic design, said she was tormented at a previous school because she has blue hair and likes to wear fishnet stockings.

Things were different when she started school at ArtsWest last fall.

"I was accepted immediately," said the 16-year-old, a singer who last year picked up bass guitar and played in a garage band.

ArtsWest has one teacher for every 12 students in its academic classes. The school employs the student-centered Harkness Method.

Principal Klein said ArtsWest has rigid minimum performance requirements.

"All students have to get a C or better, or they have to do it over," Klein said. "They have to do it until they get it right."

ArtsWest has been provisionally accredited by the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools, Klein said.

Try fruit cultivars Friday at University of Idaho

- STATESMAN STAFF

Edition Date: 09/09/08

Friday is the University of Idaho's annual Fruit Field Day, a chance for the public to try some of the university's cultivars of new grapes, peaches, nectarines, apples and other fruits.

The annual Fruit Day is held at the university's research and extension service in Parma. It's free of charge, and it's aimed at master gardeners, commercial growers and anybody else interested in growing fruit.

From 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., fruit experts will offer tastings and discuss growth bio-regulators that are applied to crops. They will also offer tours of research projects on irrigation and nutrition, chemical thinning, and pesticide use.

Visitors will also see alternative fruit crops including quinces, Asian pears, persimmons, Jujube, Haskaps and mulberries. And they'll tour the table grape vineyards. For more information, contact U of I's Pomology Program at (208) 722-6701 Ext. 212.

Idaho Governor's Cup raises \$775K for scholarships

- The Associated Press

Edition Date: 09/09/08

COEUR D'ALENE, Idaho — The 2008 Idaho Governor's Cup has raised about \$775,000 for scholarships.

Participants in the annual event compete in golf, fly-fishing and shotgun sports and the money raised goes toward scholarships for students who might not otherwise be able to attend college.

For the past 37 years, the event has been held in Sun Valley. But this year, Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter decided to take the Cup up north and it was held in Coeur d'Alene last weekend.

Katie Hammon, executive director of the Idaho Governor's Cup Scholarship Fund, said this year's fundraising total was about \$175,000 more than last year.

FROM THE TWIN FALLS TIMES-NEWS

No education news stories posted online today.

FROM THE IDAHO STATE JOURNAL (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

ISU sets stage for amphitheater

Site work begins near hypostyle on Pocatello campus

BY CASEY SANTEE
csantee@journalnet.com

POCATELLO — Construction crews are removing trees and doing other work behind Idaho State University's hypostyle in preparation for the construction of an amphitheater.

The structure will be built in conjunction with new steps and a handicapped-accessible ramp to the second floor of the Pond Student Union Building at the entrance facing the Hutchinson Quadrangle. The project is slated for completion by January.

"We need to have better access, and we need to replace the steps, so why not add an amphitheater to enhance student events," ISU Architect Cheryl Hanson said.

Crews with Vern Clark and Sons Construction removed three trees last week as the first step. The trees include a Siberian elm, a honey locust and a box elder. Hanson said two of the trees were dying, and the other was deemed a hazard due to its proximity to the first-floor entrance to the student union near the Quad.

The amphitheater will feature terraced seating which will replace the sloped, grassy area facing the hypostyle. At the base of the seating, square blocks of paving stone will connect the structure to the concrete walkway already in existence near the student union.

Pocatello-based JHS Architects designed the project.

"It will make it much nicer," Hanson said. "It will be a place where people can sit and look down from above."

Hanson added that the stone pieces imbedded in the retaining wall near the current steps will be recycled for future university projects.

FROM THE IDAHO FALLS POST REGISTER (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Laptop geography

Students use Google Earth to zoom in on subject

By CLARK CORBIN ccorbin@postregister.com

Elliott Hess / ehess@postregister.com - Fourth-grader Emma Ostler, right, and Mariah Covey, sixth grade, share a computer while looking at what they found on Google Earth on Aug. 28 at Bush Elementary School.

If geography continues to be this cool, A.H. Bush Elementary School student Adryan Lopez may have a new favorite subject.

Adryan and the rest of the students in Zoe Jorgensen's fourth-through sixth-grade spectrum class are using laptops, the computer program Google Earth and Web sites including mapquest.com to study the Earth, the state of Idaho and the city of Idaho Falls.

"What I've found is places around where I grew up," Adryan said. "What's surprised me is how big Idaho is. I thought it was just small, but when you get on the map and look at all the streets and cities, it looks pretty good."

For some of the students, the exercises Aug. 28 marked the first time they had seen their street, school or city from a vantage point other than a bicycle or in their parents' cars.

"I love this," Deacon Berrett said. "It's the coolest Web site on Earth, besides Lego.com."

The students learned the difference between planets, hemispheres, continents, countries, states and counties and then used computers to look up correct maps of each. Some students typed in key words, such as Bonneville County, to narrow their searches, while others used computer navigation tools to manually search maps of the state.

"It's awesome," Mariah Covey said. "It gives you a real challenge. It's hard to find where you live."

Many students said using the technology brought an element of fun into the lessons, and they consider the early assignment a preview of more interesting classes to come.

"Mrs. J. is pretty fun, especially when she lets us use computers," Adryan said.